

Avoiding Summer Hazards

Wave
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By Dr. Janet Kelly

Summer is a time for outdoor activities and fun, but it can also be a time fraught with discomfort if you encounter certain summer hazards, especially stinging insects and poisonous plants. This week we'll talk about the identification, prevention and treatment of insect stings.

Each year, thousands of people are stung by venomous insects, sometimes with severe or even fatal consequences. At least 40 insect-sting fatalities occur annually in the U.S. Two subgroups of the order Hymenoptera are responsible for most insect stings. The first of these include the honeybee and bumble bee. The second includes wasps, hornets and yellow jackets.

The honey bee is the only stinging insect that loses its barbed stinger in the skin. For the bee, this means certain death; in fact, one way to identify a honey bee sting is to find the stinger in the skin.

Most other stinging insects, however, have a smooth stinger which enables them to inflict multiple stings. Wasps build nest resembling honeycombs and locate them in sheltered places, such as the underside of porches and under eaves. Both hornets and yellow jackets, on the other hand,

build their nests on or near the ground.

The venom injected by these insects differ, so if you are allergic to one insect you may not be allergic to them all. However, there can be a cross reaction to the venoms in the subgroups, so if you are allergic to the Wasp you may also become allergic to the yellow jacket. Of all the insects in the order Hymenoptera, the yellow jacket is the most common cause of skin reaction.

Insect stings set off a number of different reactions. The ordinary response is a localized one with sharp pain followed by an enlarging red area which itches and burns. This reaction is almost gone within 24 hours. If the sting occurs at the foot, however, swelling may develop lasting several days.

If you are stung repeatedly in a short period of time, a toxic reaction can occur resulting in headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. If you are a non-allergic person a single sting in the future will probably not result in this type of reaction again.

A delayed reaction to the sting can also happen. This is characterized by quite a large area of redness and swelling near the sting. The swelling can involve an

entire extremity. The pain can be severe, reaching a peak in 48 to 72 hours and may last up to a week. Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference between a delayed reaction from an infection secondary to the sting. Another type of delayed reaction may occur hours or even days after the sting. The symptoms include fever, muscle aches, swollen glands and a fine bright red rash.

The real threat of an insect sting is a total body allergic reaction. About 1/2 percent of the U.S. population is at risk for such a reaction. Typically, the symptoms begin in the first 15 minutes and may include the following:

Intense itching with a rash over the skin

Swelling of the face and neck

Difficulty in breathing

Nausea and vomiting

Anything other than a purely local reaction should be seen by a physician immediately.

If you are allergic to insect venom you must take some special precautions to avoid being stung. They are good precautions to take even if you aren't allergic!

1) Foods: Because insects are attracted to foods avoid eating outside if possible. If not, cover or wrap all foods while outdoors.

2) Gardening: Wear gloves while working the garden and

don't inadvertently upset a hive in a tree or bush.

3) Clothing: Brightly colored and dark colored clothes attract insects more than light colored clothes. Try to wear long sleeves and pants.

4) personal Care Products: Stinging insects are attracted to odors, so don't wear perfumes, hair sprays, after shave lotions, etc. Also avoid shiny jewelry.

5) Windows: Keep all windows screened and car windows rolled up at all times.

6) Insect Repellents: These are effective in warding off noxious insects and may be helpful against bees and wasps as well. The most effective contain diethyltoluamide ("deet") which is found in Off and Cutters. They must be applied over the entire area of exposed skin. They wash off easily, so be sure to reapply them after swimming. Incidentally, sweat also attracts insects, so it's doubly important to reapply a repellent frequently on hot days. And don't let repellents lull you into a false sense of security. Some bees don't care if you are wearing them!

Dr. Kelly is a board certified family practitioner and Assistant Professor with the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Utah. She has recently opened an office in Heber at 570 E. Center Street.

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Counseling Institute Offers Child Abuse Program

Park City Family Counseling Institute has recently renewed their contract with the Utah State Department of Social Services, Division of Family Services, to work with families in Summit and Wasatch counties in a prevention program for child abuse and neglect.

The \$6,000 grant will provide

funding to enable families and single parents experiencing high stress levels and deteriorating parent-child relationships, to get help in the form of parent training, communication skills building and stress management.

"We encourage parents who are having daily difficulties in coping and feel unable to provide nurturing to their children to seek help before a crisis develops," states Nancy Bradish, therapist and Assistant Director of the Institute. "Danger signals such as increased hostility and frequent unexplained irritability towards one's children are especially at high risk and vulnerable to becoming abusive parents themselves."

To find out more information about this program call the Park City Family Counseling Institute at 649-2426.

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